

Mba candidate



Case – Maria Sharapova: Marketing a Champion Executive Summary Maria Sharapova became a Wimbledon champion at the age of 17. In addition to being a great personal milestone, this championship was also an important phase of tennis career for Sharapova and IMG from a marketing perspective. Her skills and personality, attractive looks, and unique personal story combined into a powerful brand. Her agent, Max Eisenbud, was responsible for handling and growing the brand.

Eisenbud pondered how to best market the Sharapova brand while prioritizing the various offers available, keeping in mind her long term goals, and utilizing IMG's global sales force. Eisenbud should accept the Motorola offer to enhance Sharapova's global image. His decision on other offers should be based on her schedule, brand image and long term potential. IMG, the agency Eisenbud works for, already has a talented and global salesforce in place.

Eisenbud should work closely with these people to find good offers that can be profitable for Sharapova and the agency while meeting the constraints mentioned above to ensure a win-win situation for everyone. 1. Should Max Eisenbud and the other members of “ team Sharapova” engage in the Motorola partnership? Should they consider any other possibilities? Why? They should engage in the Motorola partnership if it does not interfere with Sharapova's schedule for training and tournaments. The Razor product will be distributed widely to consumers and reach a global market.

Sharapova can get the added benefit of exposure to individuals who have not known her before. In addition, a majority of the audience saw the

moment when Sharapova won the championship and called her mom. The scene lingered with the audience and making the commercial based on that could reinforce the glory moment and the close family relationship. It makes Sharapova not only a champion but also a champion with human needs and soul. Even though an apparel endorsement with a sporting goods company is more common for op-ranked women in tennis, the Motorola brand is well-known and would be a good partner to the competitive image of Sharapova. Here is a review of why she should or should not consider the other opportunities:

- Advertising campaign for a furniture company in U. K. – A furniture company does not work to enhance her brand and Sharapova will probably not want to do it merely for money. The company also requested a six-week advertising campaign in UK which probably affect her practice schedule.
- Luxury goods event in China – The products would play well off of her beauty and could fit into her schedule.

In addition, the timing would help her reach the Chinese market which may not know her as well as other markets in Europe and the Americas.

- Personal fragrance license – Her newfound fame make this opportunity worthwhile to have something to call her own. The success she has garnered ensures that this product would at least have a jump start off the ground.
- Launch event in Dublin – The event coincides with some available time in her schedule and is a good opportunity to gain additional publicity. Since she does not have to directly endorse the product, less risk exist in the relationship.
- Luxury goods event endorsement – The endorsement would definitely play well with her beauty image, but the opening of the store in Russia will not work with her schedule. Russian fans may be disappointed by

Sharapova's lack of showing at the store opening and negative press may result. This opportunity is a bit risky since her brand is still developing. • Skin care treatment endorsement – This opportunity would play along with the beauty of Sharapova. However, being part of a group of celebrities rather than taking center stage may not be beneficial to her image at this point.

She may not want the association of being just another pretty face supporting the skin care product. Thus, this endorsement should be avoided so that she does not end up being another Kournikova in the long run. 2.

What should the team's general marketing strategy be for Maria Sharapova?

The team should focus on building and extending the Sharapova brand through the known associations with her being beautiful and competitive.

The goal is for her to stand alone as a unique combination unseen to the public in the past. A fresh win at Wimbledon establishes Sharapova as a competitive tennis force.

Her stature and look go a long way to attract male and female audiences alike. These traits should be emphasized in relationships sought with companies. They should look to bring her brand to new markets who may not know her. Also, Sharapova should not be lost in the crowd of either women tennis player or beautiful women. Endorsements should not only reinforce these traits but also bring her identity to new markets. Time constraint exists based on her scheduling, so only opportunities within these realms should be considered. Merely making money is not enough in a relationship is not enough.

Ultimately, people need to have an image of a beautiful woman who can destroy competitors on the court when they think of the name Sharapova. 3. How can we describe the “ brand” Sharapova? The brand of Sharapova represents the promise of success, since it not only suggests winning championships on the tennis courts but also indicates the hard work she put in to earn the once-in-a-life-time chance to shine. Sharapova does not come from a rich family which has the enormous resource or ability to cultivate Sharapova’s tennis talent.

Contrarily, Sharapova’s parents, like a lot of immigrants, came to United States with the American Dream in mind. Her father tried his best to find the opportunity for Sharapova to use her potential, even though the chance seemed to be insignificant. The family’s sacrifice is only one aspect of the success; Sharapova is relentless in her preparation and her hard work accompany combined with her talent will fulfill her ambition to continue starring in the world of women’s tennis. Moreover, Sharapova is beautiful and easily catches people’s attention.

She is young and shows great potential for lasting success. With her story, image, and performance, Maria Sharapova is like a shining star in the night sky whenever she steps onto a tennis court or off into the media world. 4. What is agent Max Eisenbud’s role? What can he do for Sharapova and for IMG? And how is he compensated for his efforts? As Sharapova’s agents, Max Eisenbud has a lot of different responsibilities, ranging from arranging travel and accommodations to booking appearances, exploring licensing opportunities, and negotiating endorsement deals, and taking of other marketing tasks.

He takes care of Sharapova's hassles so that she can focus on practicing tennis and improve her skills. Meanwhile, Eisenbud also helps to build Sharapova's brand image to create more benefits for Sharapova in terms of endorsements and sponsorships. In order to accomplish these tasks, Eisenbud must maintain strong communication with IMG's sales team so that the unique characteristics of Sharapova can be correctly communicated and the right endorsement deals can be selected, which can reinforce both the image of Sharapova as well as the image of IMG. Max Eisenbud is compensated in the form of a fixed salary.

He may receive a bonus at the end of the year depending on how the tennis division is doing, but he does not have a sales-based commission. Since Eisenbud does not have commission based on sales, he can more focus on selecting the best opportunity to fit Sharapova's image and brand instead of following his own personal agenda for profits.

5. How would you describe IMG's approach to selling athlete endorsements? Following were the important components of IMG's approach to selling athlete endorsements:

- Capitalize on strengths – IMG was uniquely positioned to sell athlete endorsements with its global reach, marketing expertise gained over decades and well established relationships with the biggest companies in the world.
- Long-term relation and personal touch – IMG focused on developing a long term and personal relationships with athletes by having dedicated agents look after athletes' needs. The agent would be associated with the athlete from a very young age and get to know the athlete's personality.
- Focus on “ Brand” – The agent will further use the knowledge of the athlete's persona

to build a personal “ brand” for the athlete. The agent will also advise the athlete to build her brand in a particular way.

E. g. Eisenbud advised Sharapova to give interviews only after winning to build a winner’s image. Any endorsement would be finalized after considering the fit between the athlete’s and the sponsor’s brand image. • Team orientation – The IMG’s approach to sell athlete endorsements was also very team-oriented where the team comprised of the athlete, the agent and the sales team. As soon as the athlete had a major success, the agent and the global sales team will work together to prepare a “ blitz package” aimed at the companies that might be interested in endorsing the athlete.

IMG’s agent then tried to prioritize the various offers on hand considering relevant factors such as a brand fit, long-term goals and the athlete’s schedule. The agent would also discuss the various brand endorsement opportunities with the athlete so there is mutual consent before any deal goes through. There was a lot of collaboration between the agents as well, and they frequently talked amongst themselves to learn from each other’s experience.